



Michigan
Office of the Auditor General
REPORT SUMMARY

Performance Audit

Wildlife Division

Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Report Number:
75-151-02

Released:
January 2003

The Wildlife Division's mission is to enhance, restore, and conserve the State's wildlife resources, natural communities, and ecosystems for the benefit of Michigan's citizens, visitors, and future generations. The Division's functions include managing wildlife populations and habitats, monitoring the health of wildlife populations, and protecting threatened and endangered species.

Audit Objectives:

1. To assess the effectiveness of the Division's operations for managing wildlife populations and habitats.
2. To assess the effectiveness of the Division's operations related to disease control for wildlife populations.

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Audit Conclusions:

1. The Division's operations for managing wildlife populations and habitats were generally effective.
2. The Division's operations related to disease control for wildlife populations were effective. Although significant disease issues exist, pursuit of remedies within current knowledge parameters has been reasonable.

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Reportable Conditions:

1. Deer Population Goals

DNR needs to develop additional and enhance existing strategies to reduce the deer populations in areas with projected populations significantly above the population goals.

Our review of the Division's deer management reports for 2001 disclosed that the Division projected that the total actual deer population for 6 of 8 wildlife management units (WMUs) exceeded the WMUs' population goal by over 10% (see table on the back of this summary). The Division's projections indicated that the total actual deer populations for these WMUs exceeded the population goal totals by approximately 325,000.

The projected deer populations for the 8 WMUs were as follows:

WMU	Population Goal	Projected Population	Percentage Over Population Goals
Western Upper Peninsula	371,284	378,999	2%
Eastern Upper Peninsula	117,100	105,761	(10%)
Northeastern Lower Peninsula	231,900	258,185	11%
Northwestern Lower Peninsula	251,500	336,391	34%
Saginaw Bay	173,000	246,144	42%
Southeastern Lower Peninsula	56,750	79,612	40%
South Central Lower Peninsula	220,248	264,853	20%
Southwestern Lower Peninsula	172,700	246,000	42%

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2. Master Plans for State Game and Wildlife Areas

The Division did not ensure that master plans for State game and wildlife areas were completed as required by established policy.

The Division is responsible for managing 83 State game and wildlife areas. These game and wildlife areas cover approximately 400,000 acres. Division policy requires that a master plan covering a 5- or 10-year period be developed for each State game and wildlife area. The purpose of the master plan is to establish long-term goals and objectives for an area, taking into consideration input from stakeholder groups and the public.

Our review of a sample of 20 State game areas disclosed that the Division did not have a current master plan for 16 (80%) game areas. For 5 of the 16 game areas, no master plan could be located. For 10 of the 16 game areas, the master plans had not been updated for periods ranging from 11 to 17 years.

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Agency Response:

DNR concurs with both recommendations.

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A copy of the full report can be obtained by calling 517.334.8050 or by visiting our Web site at: www.state.mi.us/audgen/



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